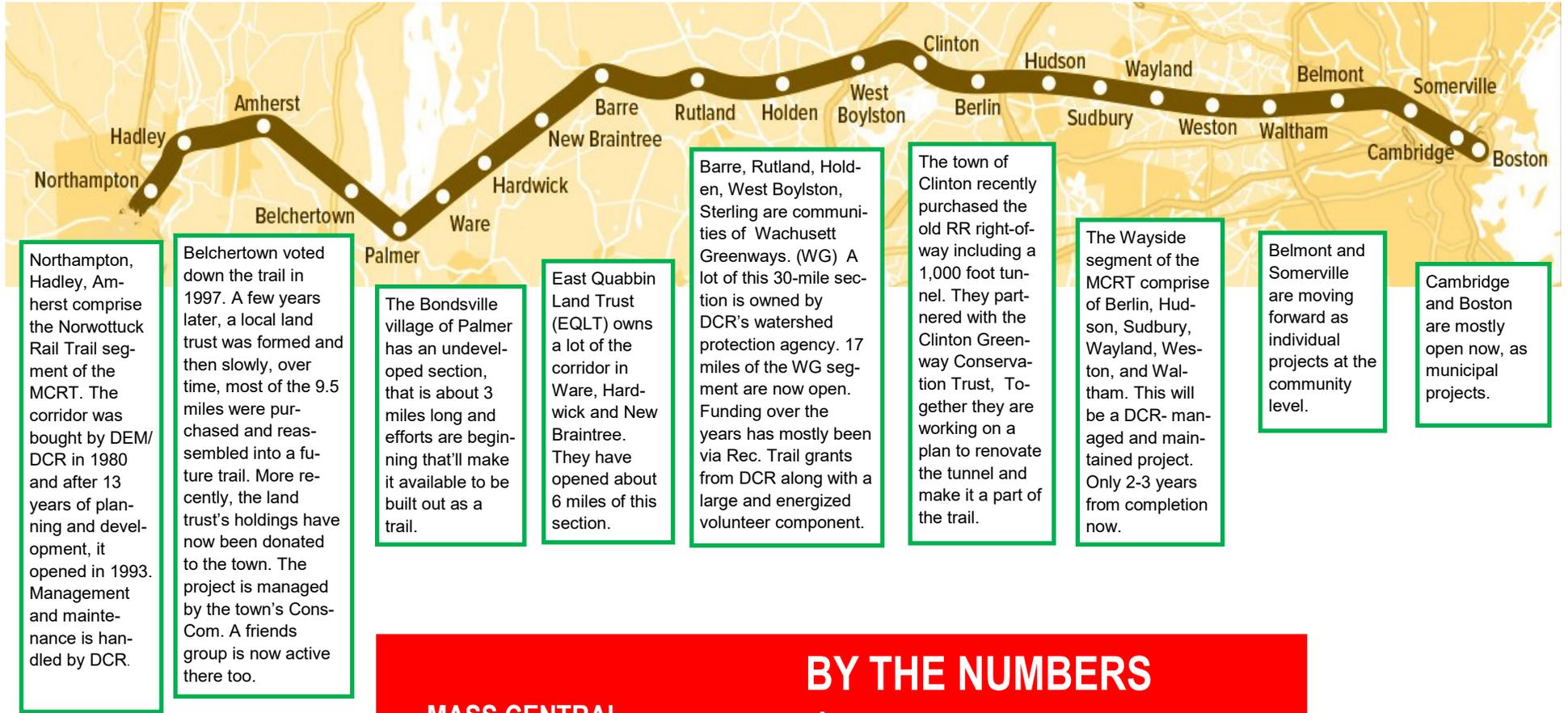




# How the idea of the MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL — as a 100 mile trail has progressed over the years.



BY THE NUMBERS				
<b>MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL DATA</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>51±</b>	<b>90.5±</b>	<b>13.5±</b>
	Number of miles from Boston to Northampton	Number of miles open today	Number of miles owned by a protecting agency	Number of miles owned by a non-protecting entity

## A TIMELINE OF THE JOURNEY THUS FAR TO PIECE TOGETHER THE CORRIDOR

**1980:** The Mass. State Parks agency—then DEM, now DCR —purchases the western most 8.5 miles of the corridor and begins a 13 year process to plan and redevelop the corridor.

**1988:** The Fisk family completes a walk from Northampton Union Station to North Station Boston and they write a never-published manuscript. A copy of this was given to a top DEM official, who kept a copy in his office and referred to it often. He passed away a few years ago, but he knew it could be pieced together. <https://tinyurl.com/MCRTFisk>

**1993:** The Norwottuck Rail Trail opened. It was one of the last formal, paved, bikeways in the US to be built at the old design width of 8 feet. In 2015, the trail was widened to 10± feet in 2015.

**1995:** Wachusett Greenways (WG) was formed and they purposely decided to build out their sections as a soft surface—stone-dust trail, and not a paved trail. This was a momentous decision. Receiving small grants through the DCR grants process— that also encouraged a volunteer component—meant this would be built much faster. The other alternative, going through the transportation funding process looked much more complicated. They have completed 17 miles so far and have built or redone 10 bridges. Their service area includes 30 miles of the corridor that is largely owned by DCR's watershed protection agency.

**1995:** Both the six-community Wayside Rail Trail project and the Belchertown Rail Trail began to be talked about.

**1997:** Both Weston and Belchertown voted down their rail trail projects, with a smorgasbord of reasons, but one main reason in Belchertown was state's requirement to pave. At that time, Mass was the only state in the US to require pavement if you are using federal dollars. Local equestrians oppose paving and led the effort to fight against the trail.

**1997:** Wachusett Greenways (WG) opens their first mile of the MCRT in West Boylston.

**1998:** Commonwealth Mag. does a story about the fight in both Belchertown and Weston. <https://tinyurl.com/CommonwealthMagStory>

**1999:** DCR released a vision report that called for more trail projects and encouraged of piecing together the MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL corridor. <https://tinyurl.com/GreenwayVision>

**1999:** WG hosted the first "Golden Spike I" event, in West Boylston where Congressman Jim McGovern spoke enthusiastically to the vision for a statewide, E-W trail. <https://tinyurl.com/GoldenSpike1>

**1999:** The Federal Highway Administration encourages all states to hold a Millennium Trail Contest. Norwottuck Network (NN) was named the winning entry for Massachusetts. <https://www.nnnetwork.net/about-us>

**2002:** A 2nd event, Golden Spike II was held in Waltham at Bentley University, and over 400 advocates, gubernatorial candidates and policy makers turned out.

**2004:** An anti-trail group in Sudbury (Protect Sudbury) was founded to fight against both the N-S and the E-W trails. (N-S trail is the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. E-W trail is the MCRT. Both in Sudbury)

**2006:** Shortly after the discovery of a theft of a short section of the former railroad corridor in Berlin, the MBTA offered up a lease to DCR—to lease the Wayside section.

**2007:** 3.2 miles of the corridor in Hardwick was purchased by the East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT) to develop that section of the trail. This includes 3 rare bridges.

**2011:** After several years of negotiations, the MBTA and DCR entered into a lease agreement for the entire 24 mile Wayside section, including the eastern 2/3 of the corridor in Berlin. The western 1/3 in Berlin is still—in 2022— owned by the B&M RR.

**2014:** A report was released about the Erie Canal Trail showed that it produced \$253+ million a year for the state of NY and communities along the way. <https://tinyurl.com/ErieCanalReport>

**2017:** Norwottuck Network (NN) launched a free, monthly E-newsletter about news along the MCRT, that quickly ramped up to over 10,000 subscribers in 8 states. And a little more than a year in, Constant Contact names it in the top 10% of all their E-newsletters world wide.

**2017:** Wachusett Greenways opens the 17th mile of their segment of the MCRT. <https://tinyurl.com/WGMission>

**2017:** The Belchertown Land Trust donates to the town, 5 miles of the MCRT increasing town owned sections to be nearly 7 of the 9.5 total miles. <https://www.belchertowngreenway.org/by-the-numbers>

**2017:** Friends of the Belchertown Greenway was formed. <https://www.belchertowngreenway.org>

**2017:** Because of the huge economic development numbers shown in the Erie Canal report, the NY Governor instructed NYDOT to build another 400 miles in 4 years.

**2017:** Wayland and Weston sections of Wayside Trail began construction because Eversource's utility upgrade made the trail construction by DCR easier/faster.

**2018:** EQLT purchases a farm in Ware that includes another mile of the MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL corridor and begins to develop it.

**2018:** The 7th Golden Spike event was held in Northampton. <https://www.gs2018.org/>

**2019:** NN was re-launched with a broader mission and a larger, more geographically encompassing board.

**2019:** Weston and Wayland segments of the Wayside section open. Eversource's grid enhancement project makes it easier and less expensive for DCR to build the trail.

**2020:** Protect Sudbury fights the Eversource plan in Sudbury to build a more resilient and robust grid by putting it underground, under the future trail.

**2020:** NY completes the Empire State Trail. 750 miles total. <https://empiretrail.ny.gov/>

**2020:** The Town of Clinton along with the Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust purchased the 1,000 foot tunnel and a remaining mile or so of dead corridor still owned by the B&M RR. <https://tinyurl.com/TunnelClinton>

**2020:** MassDOT commissions a feasibility study of the MCRT and hires VHB, a consulting firm, to identify the missing pieces and come up with a plan to develop work-arounds until the expensive missing pieces can be filled-in.

**2021:** The VHB study is finalized and released. <https://tinyurl.com/MCRT-Study>

**2021:** Protect Sudbury loses at the SJC. <https://tinyurl.com/SJC-ruling>

**2022:** Protect Sudbury loses at the Surface Transportation Board in Washington DC. <https://tinyurl.com/STB-ruling>

**2022:** EQLT enters into a lease agreement with National Grid for another 2.3 miles of the MCRT corridor in the Hardwick village of Gilbertville.

**2022:** Golden Spike III 2022 is to be held in Gilbertville on 7-30-22. <https://www.gs2022.org/>

**April 2022:** Norwottuck Network sends out a RFP to develop a report to show just what the economic impact of completing the trail would mean for the state and the communities.

**April 2022:** Outside Magazine calls the Empire State Trail the best rail trail in the U.S.

**July 2022:** Golden Spike 2022 held in Gilbertville Mass at The Stone Church on Main St. <http://www.gs2022.org>